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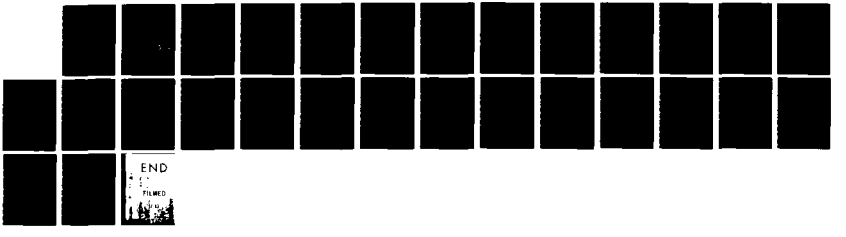

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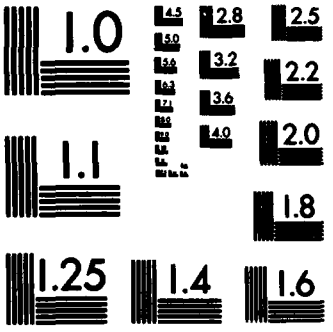

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A field experiment was conducted to assess the effects of three types of job previews (realistically specific, realisically general, and no preview) on newly hired bank tellers. The N=249 new hires were monitored for 43 weeks after entry into the bank. The Specific Job Preview clearly and significantly lowered initial job expectations compared to the other two groups. There were no significant differences among job preview groups in terms of their initial attitudes toward the organization, nor their job performance. The major criterion of interest, overall job survival rates, was also unaffected

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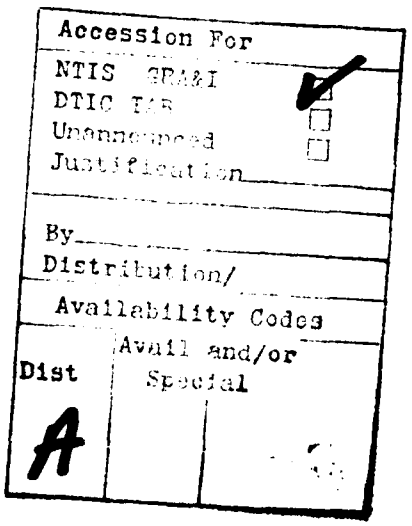
by previews. However, the rate at which turnover did occur was significantly different. Among those who ultimately left the bank, those in the Specific and General job preview groups tended to leave during the first three weeks (during formal, off-the-job training), whereas the No Preview leavers departed more often during the first 20 weeks after training (during the acquisition of job competence "up to standard").



THE EFFECTS OF REALISTIC JOB PREVIEWS ON HIRING BANK TELLERS

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THE EFFECTS OF REALISTIC JOB PREVIEWS ON HIRING BANK TELLERS

There is a growing body of field experiments assessing the effects of realistic job previews on newcomers to organizations (Wanous, 1980). A recent review calculated that the turnover rates for realistic job previews (RJPs) versus other previews (or no preview) are 19.8% versus 25.5%, a 5.7 percentage point difference (Reilly, Brown, Blood, and Malatesta, 1981). This was based on 11 field studies of over 4,500 participants in a variety of organizations (military, service, educational, and manufacturing). In practical terms this difference in turnover rates seems to suggest that an organization not using an RJP will have 28.8% higher turnover on the average (i.e., $5.7 \div 19.8 = .288$).

The average difference may be misleading, because there is considerable variance among studies. This has led some to suggest that more attention should be paid to the design of the RJP itself by considering it as a special case of "persuasive communication" (Popovich and Wanous, 1982). Thus, increased attention should be paid to such factors as the source of an RJP, the message content, the medium used, and the characteristics of the audience (job candidates). Practically speaking, however, it is extremely difficult to examine all four of these persuasive factors in a field experiment.

One theoretical concern of this study was to assess the effects of different types of message content on job performance. Although previous RJP research found no effect on performance (Wanous, 1980), it has been hypothesized that a specific, not general, RJP might affect job performance by increasing initial role clarity (Wanous, 1978).

A second theoretical issue concerns the psychological mechanisms that have been hypothesized to explain the effects of RJPs on turnover. Those currently offered are: (1) an expectation vaccination effect, (2) a self selection effect, (3) a gratitude-for-being-honest effect, and (4) a role clarifying effect (see Wanous, 1980, for a review). The latter three "effects" are

probably contingent upon the RJP first "vaccinating" expectations (see McGuire, 1964). Without expectation vaccination, it is difficult to imagine how the other purported effects could occur. This is because the message of an RJP must first be received and comprehended (i.e., expectations vaccinated) by job candidates if they are to: (1) self select a job, (2) feel grateful, or (3) have initial role clarity (see Wanous, 1980, p. 43). To test this , two RJPs were designed. One contained mostly general statements about the job and organization, while the other contained both general and specific statements. If the Wanous (1978) hypothesis is correct, the General Preview should reduce turnover, whereas the Specific preview should reduce turnover and increase performance.

From a practical perspective several issues were important. First and foremost the bank wanted the RJP to reduce turnover, resulting in cost savings. This was crucial because the year prior to this study the bank hired 600 tellers to maintain a workforce of 1,400, resulting in a $1,680,000 cost, based on a replacement cost estimate (see Discussion) of $2,800 per teller. Second, the bank was interested in any other beneficial effects that RJPs might have, such as increased commitment, decreased thoughts of quitting, reduced absenteeism and tardiness, or possibly increased job performance.

Method

Research site and subjects. This experiment was conducted in a large bank employing about 1,400 tellers. Participants were candidates for the teller job who had not previously worked as a teller, nor had previously worked at this particular bank. Excluding job candidates who had previous experience is important because the RJP is only designed for those without extensive job/organizational knowledge. Including experienced job candidates would only contaminate the results. A total of N = 249 teller job candidates were randomly assigned into a job preview group, hired, and began training.

Design of the experiment. Three types of job preview groups were compared: (1) an RJP booklet containing both specific and general information, (2) an RJP booklet containing mostly general information, and (3) a "no preview" condition. A particular job preview condition was randomly chosen for each hiring period of 3-4 weeks, during which a "training class" was completed (about 15-20 persons). Thus, all those in a training class received the same preview in order to prevent contamination of results by having tellers who received different job previews. A total of 16 training groups were included for study: (1) four Specific RJP groups (N = 63), (2) five General RJP groups (N = 91), and (3) seven No Preview groups (N = 95).

Due to severely depressed economic conditions which caused low hiring rates, it took about 16 months to obtain the present sample. Follow-up data on turnover were monitored for the first 43 weeks of employment for all tellers. This extended the data gathering period another 10 months.

The RJPs were given to teller applicants after they had completed a job application form, and were judged to be potentially qualified by an interviewer. All of these initial "screening" interviews were conducted at the main office of the bank, even for those who had initially applied at a branch office. If a candidate passed this interview, assignment was made to one of the three job preview groups. Those receiving an RJP were told to read the booklet and return for testing at a later time. The No Preview persons were simply told to return for testing at a later time. All job candidates returned for testing. Thus, there was no self-selection at this point. In fact, virtually all were given job offers, except for two candidates. Job offer acceptance rates were virtually identical across groups, ranging from 69.0% to 71.6%. Again, there were no differences in self-selection.

The first day of employment was devoted to orientation, and completion of the first of two research questionnaires. The second questionnaire was mailed

to tellers who were still with the bank after eight weeks (3 weeks of training plus 5 weeks of job experience).

Measures. To test the effects of previews on initial expectations, the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, and Hulin, 1969), or JDI, was used in an "expectations" format for the first day questionnaire, and its traditional "descriptive" format at Eight Weeks. The alpha reliabilities for the JDI expectations and descriptions formats, respectively, are as follows: Work (.63, .69), Pay (.65, .78), Supervison (.66, .79), Coworkers (.80, .78), and Promotions (.80, .84). Because this is a service organization, a sixth JDI-type scale called Customers was developed. It had 12 adjectives (annoying, friendly, easy to work with, unreasonable, rude, grateful, discourteous, tough to please, helpful, pleasant, impatient, and expecting too much). The internal consistency (alpha) of this scale was .81 for expectations and .79 for descriptions.

Other attitude scales included in both questionnaires were the following: (1) the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ, alpha = .74) developed by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974), (2) a three item scale measuring one's desire to remain employed at the bank (alpha = .87), (3) a three item scale measuring one's perception of the bank's honesty and concern for newcomers (alpha = .64).

Branch managers were mailed a questionnaire at the same time the Eight Week survey was conducted. Managers supplied information to calculate the quality of job performance (number of days without errors $\div$ number of days scheduled). This was not a "supervisory rating," rather it was an actual counting taken from bank records, thus its reliability is probably close to perfect. It is an important measure, since the bank gives it high weight in performance appraisals.

Design of the RJPs. To insure that job candidates were given complete, relevant, and unbiased information, three different sources of data were used. First, several groups of tellers (N = 100, approximately) of varying tenure were interviewed. The purpose was to gain informal knowledge about the tellers job, so that a subsequent questionnaire could have at least part of it written in the "language" of those in this particular organization, i.e., an "empathic" questionnaire (Alderfer and Brown, 1972). As a result of these interviews, three issues/concerns were uncovered, how does a teller get a pay raise, receive a promotion, and how can a teller move into branch management. The interviewees were asked to supply their own ideas of how these might occur, and bank managers were asked the same three questions. After identifying all the conceivable "theories" (or instrumentalities) about how to obtain these three results, questionnaire items for each were constructed. These three scales became the "empathic" part of a diagnostic questionnaire administered in the bank prior to the RJP experiment.

The other part of the diagnostic questionnaire was the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). The primary strategy for analyzing these diagnostic survey data (N = 850) was to search for inflated newcomer expectations. The means of JDS data were assessed for differing tenure groups, but few differences emerged on the job characteristics scales. Only receiving "feedback from agents" (customers) was significantly inflated. A number of satisfaction items, however, declined with tenure, e.g., general satisfaction, growth need satisfaction, and satisfaction with pay and supervision (Dean, Note 1), as has been found previously (Wanous, 1980).

The results concerning how to obtain a pay raise, a promotion, or become a manager were also compared across groups of differing tenure. Comparing the means of these path-goal scales is relatively meaningless, because not all paths to the goal are feasible--or compatible. For example, someone endorsing

the item "do nothing, because promotions are based on seniority" is unlikely to also endorse an item such as "work well because good performance is usually rewarded." (This particular aspect of these three scales made calculating on internal consistency reliability coefficient useless, too.)

Instead of assessing the means of these three scales, the correctness of a teller's perception was calculated as follows. Two senior managers from each of three departments (employment, training and development, and operations) were asked to complete these three scales by answering with their view of actual bank practice (not "official policy"). After they had done this individually, they were assembled for a group meeting to resolve their differences, and come to a consensus on the "correct" answer. The senior managers' consensus of the correct answer was subtracted (absolute value) from each teller's answers. This yielded a "coefficient of correctness" where zero meant "perfectly correct." A teller's coefficient of correctness for each scale was then correlated with length of organizational tenure. Negative correlations indicate increasing accuracy (lower scores) with increasing tenure: $r = -.14$ ($p < .001$) for pay raises, $r = .05$ (n.s.) for promotions, and $r = -.21$ ($p < .001$) for moving into management. Thus, statements about pay raises and career opportunities were included in the RJP booklets.

Several personnel executives (head of personnel research and the senior vice president of personnel) also provided information. Thus, the information pool from which to construct the RJPs included first hand knowledge of the job from observation by the researchers, interviews with tellers, questionnaire responses, and the executives' inputs. Combining this information was done by the researchers and then checked with several managers at the bank. No rigid decision rules were used to form the RJPs, but valididty was protected by using multiple data sources and having several sources double-check the final previews. Table 1 highlights the differences (see Dean, Note 1 for complete details).

Table 1

Comparison of Realistic Job Preview Booklets

Topic	Specific RJP	General RJP
Training	Training described Failure rate	Not mentioned
Work	Banking transactions Accuracy important Working under pressure Manager schedules work	Banking transactions
Customers	Courtesy required Rude customers	Courtesy required
Career Opportunities	Promotion criteria Promotion rates How to move into branch management	The various teller positions described
Compensation	Pay rates How increases are determined Employee benefits	Pay rates Employee benefits
Summary of Major Points	Included	Not included

Results

Effects on initial expectations. Table 2 shows the results of job preview effects on Day One expectations. However, before discussing the results for the six scales shown in Table 2, it is important to explain what is meant by "predicted results" and how they were determined. For three of the six scales the Specific RJP group should have the lowest expectations, and there should be "no differences" among groups in the remaining three scales. This prediction is based on an assessment that the two preview booklets described Work, Promotions, and Customers differently. Thus, if job candidates read and comprehended the booklets, their expecations should be lower on these three scales—a direct reflection of the differences in booklet content. In contrast, the booklets were judged sufficiently similar (both said the same thing, or both said nothing) on the other three scales. Thus, the prediction is that no differences will be found for Pay, Supervision, and Co-workers. The complexity of specifying which scales should, or should not, show differences occurs because the RJPs were specific to this job, whereas the JDI is a general instrument.

To substantiate the researchers' content analysis, a sample of 50 college students from an introductory organizational behavior class was asked to read both booklets. Students formed triads to discuss the similarities and differences between the booklets. They were asked to consider each item of the JDI scales, and judge whether it would likely be answered similarly or differently—and the direction of the difference. The mean number of items judged to be answered lower in the Specific RJP was as follows: (1) Work (18 items), M = 6.8, (2) Pay (9 items), M = 1.1, (3) Promotions (9 items), M = 5.3, (4) Co-Workers (18 items), M = .2, (5) Supervision (18 items), M = 2.4, (6) Customers (12 items), M = 8.4.

Table 2

Effects of Job Previews on Initial Expectations

Type of Initial Expectation	Job Preview Group						Comparisons Among Preview Groups				
	Specific N = 57-59		General N = 73-76		No Booklet N = 55-64		Overall ANOVA Among Groups	Predicted Differences Among Groups	Specific vs. General	Specific vs. No Booklet	General vs. No Booklet
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD					
Work Itself	35.36	6.68	39.11	6.95	38.46	5.93	F = 3.04 p <.05	Specific Group Lowest	Specific Lower p <.05	Specific Lower .05<p<.10	No Difference
Pay	17.89	4.69	18.47	4.89	19.56	4.01	F = 1.92 N.S.	No Difference	No Difference	Specific Lower .05<p<.10	No Difference
Promotions	19.14	6.56	21.20	5.54	20.81	4.90	F = 2.37 .05<p<.10	Specific Group Lowest	Specific Lower p <.05	Specific Lower .05<p<.10	No Difference
Supervision	43.05	4.93	43.46	5.24	41.25	6.65	F = 2.85 .05<p<.10	No Difference	No Difference	Specific Higher .05<p<.10	General Higher p <.05
Co-Workers	47.34	5.82	48.64	6.44	46.40	8.09	F = 1.85 N.S.	No Difference	No Difference	No Difference	General Higher .05<p<.10
Customers	19.76	7.74	23.24	8.54	22.41	8.05	F = 3.17 p <.05	Specific Group Lowest	Specific Lower p <.05	Specific Lower .05<p<.10	No Difference

NOTE: The sample sizes are reported as ranges, due to missing questionnaire data.

The only direct comparison that could be made was between the two RJP booklets, since their content was known. Making predictions about differences between either of the two RJPs and the No Preview group is much more difficult. However, much previous research on the initial expectations of newcomers (Bray, Campbell, and Grant, 1974; Dunnette, Arvey, and Banas, 1973; Hoiberg and Berry, 1978; Wanous, 1976) strongly suggests the expectations of No Preview tellers will be inflated relative to those created by the Specific Preview. Whether it is reasonable to expect differences between General Preview Group and the No Preview Group is questionable. This is because the greatest specificity (and therefore the most negative information) was incorporated into the Specific RJP.

Turning back to the results shown in Table 2, it can be seen that all six of the predicted differences between Specific and General groups are supported. Omega squared coefficients (Hays, 1963) were calculated for the three significant difference. They were as follows: Work (.042), Promotions (.032), and Customers (.043). While these are not large, they do represent significant differences. It also must be remembered that all six predictions were confirmed when Specific and General Preview groups are compared, i.e., the three non-significant differences were as predicted. Comparing the Specific RJP and the No Preview groups shows a similar but weaker pattern. The final column in Table 2 shows that relatively few significant differences were found between the General and No Preview groups.

Effects on job attitudes. No significant differences were found among the three groups at either Day One or Eight Weeks on the OCQ Scale means. When tellers were asked their interest in remaining at the bank at Eight Weeks, the Specific RJP group had the lowest interest ($p < .05$), opposite of predictions. When tellers were asked for their perceptions of the bank's honesty and concern for them, the Specific RJP group was significantly ($p < .05$) lower than the

other two groups, at both Day One and Eight Weeks, again the opposite from what would be expected.

Effects on job survival and job performance. Table 3 shows the job survival rates for three separate time periods, which were selected because they represent organizationally relevant stages of assimilation into the bank. The first three weeks are always devoted to formal, off-the-job training. Following training the new teller begins work in a branch, but typically does not attain a level of job proficiency "up-to-standard" until about 20 weeks of on-the-job experience (see Discussion), i.e., week number 23. Therefore, the 20 week period after training has been labeled "competence acquisition." In order to have an equal time period for comparison purposes, the second 20 week period after training is examined separately and called "performing at standard".

There were no overall differences among the three job preview groups in job survival rates, contrary to what was predicted. When each time period is assessed separately, significantly more tellers survive during training who were in the No Preview group. Because of the small differences between the two RJP groups, they were combined and the results are shown in a separate column of Table 3. Realistic job previews appear to increase the rate of early turnover, but have no impact on overall job survival. Because it took 16 months to gather these data and because unemployment rose steadily, the date of hiring could affect the turnover results. This could occur because those hired later in the period might be less likely to leave. To check for this possibility, the month someone was hired (1 to 16) was correlated with the length of job tenure (in weeks, up to a maximum of 43). The correlation was .03 (n.s.), thus the effect of increasing unemployment was not confounding these results.

Table 3

Job Survival Rates for Specific Time Periods

Time Period	Preview Booklet		Preview Groups Combined (N=154)	No Preview (N=95)	Significance Tests (all three groups)	Significance Tests (preview vs no preview)
	Specific (N=63)	General (N=91)				
Training Period: Weeks 0 - 3	48/63 = 76.2%	71/91 = 78.0%	119/154 = 77.3%	85/95 = 89.5%	$X^2 = 6.03$ 2df $p < .05$	$X^2 = 5.95$ 1df $p < .05$
Competence Acquisition: Weeks 4 - 23	39/48 = 81.3%	62/71 = 87.3%	101/119 = 84.9%	68/85 = 80.0%	N.S.	N.S.
Performing at Standard: Weeks 24 - 43	34/39 = 87.2%	50/62 = 80.6%	84/101 = 83.2%	59/68 = 86.6%	N.S.	N.S.
Overall Job Survival for First 43 Weeks	34/63 = 54.0%	50/91 = 54.9%	84/154 = 54.5%	59/95 = 62.1%	N.S.	N.S.

To test the hypothesis that the Specific RJP might increase job performance, the performance quality index was compared at Eight Weeks: Specific RJP (M = 96%, SD = 7.4%), General RJP (M = 96.6%, SD = 4.9%), No Preview (M = 94.1%, SD = 8.1%). These differences were not significant, thus no support was found for the hypothesis.

Effects on the rate of leaving. Table 4 shows an analysis on only the tellers (N = 106) who left during the first 43 weeks after entry. Because of the small differences between the two RJP groups, they were again combined in a separate column. If a person received an RJP and ultimately left the organization, they were more likely to do so during training. Conversely, those in the No Preview Group (who ultimately left the bank) were more likely to do so during the first 20 weeks on the job. There were no differences in turnover rates among groups during the second 20 weeks of employment on the job.

Discussion

The results here provide only mixed support for current conceptions of the RJP. The strongest finding was that the Specific RJP clearly "vaccinated" (lowered) expectations as intended. Because the RJP information was selectively received, this should be reassuring to practitioners.

The vaccination effect found here was quite durable. This is because a new training class only began about once every month. Thus, several days--or even weeks--might occur between the RJP and the Day One questionnaire. Using booklets does allow a job candidate to take the RJP home and provides the opportunity to re-read the material. Another possible explanation of this durability is that a printed medium is typically superior to audio-visual methods when the content of a message is complex (Chaiken and Eagly, 1976).

In contrast to the strong support for expectation vaccination, other results found here show little or no support for the predictions made. The RJP

Table 4

Rates of Leaving the Organization for "Leavers" Only

Time Period	Preview Booklet: Specific (N=29)	Preview Booklet: General (N=41)	Preview Groups Combined (N=70)	No Preview (N=36)	Significance Tests (all three groups)	Significance Tests (preview vs no preview)
Training Period: Weeks 0 - 3	15/29 = 51.7%	20/41 = 48.8%	35/70 = 50.0%	10/36 = 27.8%	$X^2 = 4.91$ 2df $.05 < p < .10$	$X^2 = 4.85$ 1df $p < .05$
Competence Acquisition: Weeks 4 - 23	9/29 = 31.0%	9/41 = 22.0%	18/70 = 25.7%	17/36 = 47.2%	$X^2 = 5.57$ 2df $.05 < p < .10$	$X^2 = 4.95$ 1df $p < .05$
Performing at Standard: Weeks 24 - 43	5/29 = 17.0%	12/41 = 29.3%	17/70 = 24.3%	9/36 = 25.0%	N.S.	N.S.

did not appear to have any positive effect on job survival, performance, or other job attitudes. This raises the legitimate question as to whether current conceptions of the RJP should be revised in light of these data, or whether other factors can explain the pattern of results found here.

There are probably two reasons for the continued inability of RJPs to affect performance. First, the RJP may not have contained sufficient information about how to do one's job successfully, and may have focused too heavily on how to "get ahead" in the bank. Even if the Specific RJP were to be re-designed, a second consideration is even more serious. The effect of three weeks training will always "overwhelm" any possible effects due to reading an RJP booklet. The amount of <u>incremental</u> job performance information in a booklet must be extremely small in comparison to that obtained through training. Since this is likely to be a serious problem for almost any organization having a training program, researchers should not to expect RJPs to affect job performance, no matter how well they might be designed.

Perhaps the most unusual findings of this study concern turnover <u>rates</u>. Leavers from the combined Specific and General RJP Groups left at an accelerated rate, i.e., during training compared to those in the No Preview Group. No Preview leavers, however, departed faster during the first 20 weeks after training, during the acquisition of job competence period. Since this appears to be the first time this has occurred in RJP experimentation, it deserves discussion.[1]

A tempting explanation of the differences in turnover rates among the leavers is that a <u>delayed</u> "self selection effect" took place. No self selection had taken place prior to the beginning of training, no doubt a reflection of the severely depressed local economic conditions. Thus it is possible that skeptical newcomers in the RJP groups only needed the additional experience and information obtained during training to conclude that it was

time to leave. In contrast, the No Preview recruits may have needed the additional experience after training to confirm skeptical feelings that were first aroused during training. While this is a reasonable explanation, there is no direct evidence supporting it, e.g., exit interviews with the early leavers.

From the bank's perspective the rate of turnover does have important cost implications, because "early" turnover generally costs less than late turnover. Based on two different internal audits of bank teller replacement costs, the following were estimated: hiring, $150; orientation, $50; off-the-job training, $1500; on-the-job training, $250; and lost production until a teller "makes standard," $850. Standard is reached after 20 weeks on the job, or at the end of 23 weeks when training is included. Replacement costs total to $2800 for a teller who leaves after 23 weeks. Thus, those who leave earlier do not cost the full $2800. In fact, those who leave during training cost about $950 ($150 for hiring, $50 for orientation, and about $750 for training). Training costs were estimated at $750, because some tellers left earlier than others during the three week period. If a teller left between weeks 4-23, the replacement cost is higher, because the full training cost is lost ($1500 rather than $750), the OJT cost of $250 is incurred, and about half of the lost production cost ($850/2 = $425) is added. Thus, a teller leaving during weeks 4-23 costs $1425 more than one during training, for a total of $2375.

Extreme caution should be exercised in using these cost estimates, however. First, the two internal audits disagreed in several important aspects, e.g., how long it takes to reach standard. Second, costs are figured on a per person basis, but this average cost is dramatically affected by the number of tellers processed in a given year. Because of fixed costs, the average cost usually goes down when more tellers are hired. (This was one

reason the two audits differed.) Third, the turnover rates found during this study were certainly affected by the local economic depression, so they may not be generally representative. Considering these three cautions, perhaps the most conservative conclusion is that early turnover costs less --up to the point when a teller "reaches standard." So, while the RJPs had no effect on overall job survival, they probably saved the bank some replacement costs.

Overall job survival was unaffected for three reasons. First, annual hiring dropped from 600 to 300 during the two years of this research. This, in effect, curtailed the variance in turnover, making it more difficult to detect differences between groups due to a job preview. Second, this particular type of low level job, may not be amenable to an RJP because Reilly, et al. (1981) found RJPs were more effective for complex jobs. Perhaps the RJP cannot add much new information to a low complexity job, because there is little that can be added. Finally, RJPs may only be able to add small marginal amounts of information to such service jobs with high "visibility", like a bank teller.

Reference Note

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Footnotes

1. We say "appears" because previous RJP experiments have not always assessed attrition for multiple time periods. Those that have, however, have not reported this type of result.

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